

BY DUNCAN H. BROWN

MOVIE REVIEW

She's the Man

She's the Man is a mildly funny and mildly enjoyable teen romance/comedy. Amanda Bynes plays Viola, a teen soccer player who's disappointed that the girls' soccer team at her high school is disbanded. How can she play and prove she deserves a soccer scholarship at the college of her choice? Opportunity (of a sort) arises when her twin brother Sebastian tells her he's going to London for two weeks to play some music gigs, instead of registering at a nearby high school for classes. So Viola, through some makeup magic, registers in his place and tries out for the boys' soccer team.

This movie is loosely based on Shakespeare's play *Twelfth Night*, in which another Viola pretends to be her brother Sebastian. But Shakespeare handled the material a lot better than this movie, which manages to miss Shakespeare's wit and humor and talent for creating memorable characters who live on after the play is over.

The problem with this movie is Amanda Bynes's performance. She's a charming, funny, interesting girl as far as we can see in the movie. But her attempts to pretend to be a boy just aren't at all convincing. It's tough to see the actors around her hitting their marks and speaking their lines, yet having to behave as if it's not obvious that she isn't a boy.

I'm willing to suspend my disbelief for a decent movie. This movie, unfortunately, didn't quite measure up. There were laughs, and there was a bit of romance that made sense. But the rest was a huge gulf of unrealized potential and missed opportunities.

Should you see this movie? Yes, if you really like Amanda Bynes. Otherwise, check out a DVD of *10 Things I Hate*

About You. It's also based on Shakespeare, but it's witty, funny, and moving in ways *She's the Man* can only dream of.

16 Blocks starring Bruce Willis, Mos Def and David Morse. *16 Blocks* is good guy flick: it's also a good buddy flick. Bruce Willis is a world-weary, burnt-out cop who has problems with the bottle. Mos Def is a criminal Willis is assigned to drive "16 blocks" down to the courthouse from the jail to testify before a grand jury. But problems intervene; killers are on the lookout, their sole mission to kill Mos Def. All of this awakens something decent in Willis, and he fights back. The action scenes in this movie are believable and riveting. At times I detected echoes of the Clint Eastwood movie, *The Gauntlet*.

New and Notable on DVD

The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe is a wonderful retelling of the classic C.S. Lewis story about a group of schoolchildren who stumble into a magical world via the unlikely threshold of an old wardrobe case. It's a world where good vies with evil, all watched over by a mysterious and benevolent lion named Aslan.

King Kong This spirited retelling of the classic movie brings a new cast of characters (Naomi Watts, Jack Black and Adrien Brody) to the ominous Skull Island for a date with a big ape. Director Peter Jackson continues in top form, having just polished off a masterful version of *The Lord of the Rings*.

Whisper of the Heart Studio Ghibli, makers of *Spirited Away*, offers a delightful animated story about a bookish young girl, Shizuku, who notices a strange cat traveling on the subway. She follows the cat to a wonderful curio shop, and adventures she never imagined. This movie gives the viewer a feeling for life in modern Tokyo, and tells an enchanting and enjoyable story based on the *manga* (Japanese comic book) by Aoi Hiiragi. Highly recommended for children and for families.